

IOWA STATE UNIVERSITY

Digital Repository

Leopold Center Completed Grant Reports

Leopold Center for Sustainable Agriculture

2005

Growing your small market farm business planning program

Sherry Shafer

Drake University

Penny Brown Huber

Iowa State University

Follow this and additional works at: http://lib.dr.iastate.edu/leopold_grantreports



Part of the [Agribusiness Commons](#), and the [Agriculture Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Shafer, Sherry and Huber, Penny Brown, "Growing your small market farm business planning program" (2005). *Leopold Center Completed Grant Reports*. 244.

http://lib.dr.iastate.edu/leopold_grantreports/244

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Leopold Center for Sustainable Agriculture at Iowa State University Digital Repository. It has been accepted for inclusion in Leopold Center Completed Grant Reports by an authorized administrator of Iowa State University Digital Repository. For more information, please contact digirep@iastate.edu.



Growing your small market farm business planning program

Abstract: This business planning program offered guidance and advice to aspiring and existing specialty farm business people to create their own specialty farm business plan.

Question & Answer

Q: How does the “Grow Your Small Market Farm Business Planning Program” help farmers?

A: This planning program assists small and midsize farmers who want to write a business plan for a specialty crop or livestock. The program provides assistance for one year as they write their business plan, and learn skills to support their business venture. Project leaders found that when one-on-one assistance is provided over a year, the ability of the small specialty farm business to succeed increases greatly. Not only does the support provide an important element to these types of businesses, but the fact that the business owner can practice and receive feedback is critical to good business decision making. In addition, the program has added a network component for participants, which allows for continued learning after the program is completed.

some of the technical assistance offered during the year-long program and helped to launch a network concept.

Approach and methods

The 2004 class in small market farm business planning enrolled 13 businesses and 25 individuals from these Iowa communities: Brayton, Ankeny, Parnell, Marshalltown, Webster City, Coon Rapids, Manning, Guthrie Center, Iowa City, St. Charles, McCallsburg, and Fontanelle.

Results and discussion

The grant helped build on elements of the business planning program that had proven valuable in earlier years. The investigators provided two opportunities for the students to learn Quick Books Pro, a financial accounting system that works especially well for small businesses. An expert trainer was hired to present two four-hour training sessions, one in May and another in December.

Brown Huber visited each farm business in the summer of 2004 to discuss student needs and help assess next steps for their business. Some of the businesses need extra help and Brown Huber was able to provide aid in several ways. She:

- brought in experts to work with the two farm

Background

The project goals were to help producers identify ways they could build their existing farm businesses or add value to their crops or livestock by creating a sound and effective business plan. The Leopold Center grant provided for

Principal Investigator:

Sherry Shafer
Drake University
Des Moines

Co-investigator:

Penny Brown Huber
(Program Administrator)
Ankeny

Budget:

\$4,830 for year one

businesses that focused on prairies and prairie plants,

- assisted in reworking two business marketing plans,
- worked with two farm businesses that needed conservation plans and identified people to help with urban development challenges,
- helped one business gain entry to the Des Moines Farmers Market, and
- identified processing rules, regulations, and next steps for a business hoping to start a winery.

The program also began collaborating with a newly funded project at Iowa State University called Business Networks and Rural Community Vitality. This new effort was open to all businesses that have participated in the “Grow Your Small Market Farm Business Planning Program” (GYSMF) over the past four years and offered

an opportunity for business networking among the participants. The GYSMF program coordinated this effort, published two electronic newsletters, and helped produce a business directory.

Risk management is one of the most difficult concepts for beginning business owners to understand and is the least likely to get attention from any small business owner. The GYSMF program devoted a full day of the class curriculum and writing phase to risk management. An issue of the program newsletter was dedicated to the topic and a December 2004 conference was planned on “Solutions for Managing Your Small Business Risk.” Conference turnout did not reach anticipated levels, so the organizers will try to present the workshop again in the fall. Brown Huber plans to conduct follow-up conversations in 2005 with those who participated in this class.

For more information, contact
Sherry Shafer, ISU Small Business Development Center,
10861 Douglas Avenue, Urbandale, Iowa 50322; (515) 331-8954,
e-mail sshafer@iastate.edu